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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000084

SIPDIS

STATE PASS NSC FOR BOBBY PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/25/2016
TAGS: PGOV PREL PM EPEP ECON KDEM NI
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: PROFESSOR ASKS USG SUPPORT ON AMNESTY,
DEVELOPMENT FOR NIGER DELTA

REF: A. SEPTEL
1B. LAGOS 66
1C. LAGOS 60
1D. 08 LAGOS 509
1E. 08 LAGOS 464

Classified By: Consul General Donna M. Blair for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

11. (C) Summary: Pol-Econ Chief met with President of the Lagos Business School and 2007 Presidential candidate Patrick Utomi at his request on February 6. The militant "boys in the creeks" want to come in, Utomi said, and but do not trust the politicians who they believe will profit from any plan put together ostensibly to help the militants. They trust Utomi, to whom they have turned, because they know that nothing he does will be for his own personal gain, Utomi said. Utomi plans to lobby the Federal Government to put in place a comprehensive amnesty plan, and to begin to develop the Niger Delta; Utomi asked that the U.S. Government lend its voice in support. On behalf of the Niger Delta Governors' integrated economic development initiative, Utomi plans an April conference at which the Governors, Federal officials, and the private sector will work with outside experts to plan improvements to the Niger Delta states' agriculture infrastructure; Utomi will invite Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsak to speak and asked that Embassy transmit the letter, when written. Neither the Governors nor the "boys in the creeks" trust the Niger Delta Minister. Utomi spoke at February 5 Yenagoa rally sponsored by the Ijaw Youth Council, whose President, Chris Ekiyor, is "very smart", Utomi enthused. Patrick Utomi's reputation for integrity and public service is unparalleled among Nigerians, towering even over his stature as President of the top flight Lagos Business School, and as a former high-ranking Volkswagen Nigeria executive. That both Niger Delta Governors and militant youths alike have turned for help to a leader with a reputation for incorruptibility speaks volumes about the nature of the barrier to peace in the Niger Delta: powerful interests, civilian and military, derive enormous amounts of money illegally as a result of the continuing crisis. End Summary.

Utomi Asks USG Support for Amnesty, Development

12. (C) Pol-Econ Chief met with Patrick Utomi, Dean of the Lagos Business School and 2007 candidate for President for the African Democratic Congress (ADC) party, at his request, on February 6. Referring to the ongoing crisis in the Niger

Delta, Utomi said "The boys in the creeks want to stop", but they need help to work out the way forward. The youths have asked Utomi to help in creating a comprehensive amnesty plan, and Utomi plans to press the Federal Government on this issue. He will take his proposal to M.D. Yusuf, he said.

(Note: Yusuf is a former Inspector General of Police, who is believed to be close to President Yar'Adua. End Note)

Amnesty should be granted to all youths who turn in their guns, he said, and withheld from those who refuse to do so. At a recent meeting with militants, Utomi said, they told him that they do not trust the politicians because they know the politicians will find ways to profit from any program set up ostensibly to help the militants. The militants told Utomi they trust him because they know that nothing he does will be for his own personal gain. Utomi is convinced that "this is the year to move on the Niger Delta," because the closer Nigeria draws to 2011, the more desperate the politicians will be to get their hands on militants as a way to manipulate the election. Utomi said he is seeking U.S.

Government support in asking the Federal Government to grant amnesty to the militants, develop the Niger Delta and to begin immediately to resolve the Niger Delta crisis.

International support and pressure is crucial, he said.

Pol-Econ Chief told Utomi that the U.S. Government supports immediate resolution of the Niger Delta crisis, and would take his specific requests in that regard back to the Mission.

¶3. (C) In addition, Utomi will lobby the Federal Government for development in the Niger Delta. Utomi believes that a training program to ready militants to take up jobs as police

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officers in the Nigerian Police Force is a way to both create jobs for Niger Delta youth, and to protect people and public works in the Niger Delta. Completing the East-West Highway is an essential step toward development, he said. The international oil companies once offered to build the East-West road for the Federal Government, he claimed; as a result, he believes private interests could be interested in completing the project now on a build-operate-transfer (BOT) basis.

Utomi Asks Embassy to Transmit Invitation

¶4. (C) In his role as Chair of the Niger Delta Governors' coordinated effort for integrated development (Ref D), Utomi has organized a meeting, to be held April 22-24 at Tinapa, between the Governors and representatives not only of the new Niger Delta Ministry but of other Federal Government ministries whose work bears on development of the area. They will hear presentations on, among other things, how to revive agriculture within their states. Although Utomi sees that the "quick start" projects that the Delta State Oil Producing Areas Commission (DESOPADEC) has put in place (Ref B) are important because they are close to the people, he believes coordination between the states, especially on infrastructure, will maximize benefits, he said. Utomi plans to invite U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsak, who Utomi heard speak while he was Governor of Iowa, and asked if the Embassy could transmit the letter of invitation. Pol-Econ Chief said the Embassy would be happy to transmit the letter, (Note: Mission has not yet been given a copy of the letter. End Note) but that the short notice, and the fact that the Secretary is newly in office, might make a positive response difficult. Utomi said he would pay a courtesy call on the Ambassador to extend to her a personal invitation to attend the meeting, and to interest U.S. companies in participating; he will arrange an appointment as soon as he returns from a trip abroad to take an in depth look at how private capital has been harnessed to develop agriculture infrastructure.

¶5. (C) Asked his views on how he anticipates the Niger Delta Ministry will function, Utomi said there is little likelihood that it will operate like the Federal Capital Territory

(FCT), which oversees development of Nigeria's capital, Abuja. The Niger Delta Governors do not trust the Minister, and the boys in the creeks see him as an agent of the very people who have failed them so many times before. Neither, Utomi added, do the boys trust Chief E.K. Clark (Note: Chief Clark is an Ijaw leader and former Minister of Information. End Note.)

Utomi: IYC President "Very Smart"

¶6. (C) The previous day, Utomi had attended the meeting in Yenagoa of Ijaw youths sponsored by the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) (Septel). Chris Ekiyor, the President of the IYC (Refs C, E) is "very smart", Utomi enthused. Utomi had been asked to give a speech, which he delivered to the youths. Also in attendance was former Governor Depriye S. Alamaseigha, who remains very popular, Utomi said.

¶7. (C) Comment: Patrick Utomi's reputation for integrity and public service is unparalleled among Nigerians, towering even over his stature as President of the top flight Lagos Business School, and as a former top Volkswagen Nigeria executive. That both Niger Delta Governors and militant youths alike have turned for help to a leader with a reputation for incorruptibility speaks volumes about the nature of the barrier to peace in the Niger Delta: powerful interests, civilian and military, derive enormous amounts of money illegally as a result of the continuing crisis.

¶8. (U) This cable has been cleared by Embassy Abuja.
BLAIR